



TRILEPIDEA

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW ZEALAND PLANT CONSERVATION NETWORK

Please send news items or events to events@nzpcn.org.nz

Postal address: P.O. Box 16-102, Wellington, New Zealand

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Deadline for next issue: Friday 13 May 2005

Message from the President

Few issues seem to have galvanised plant conservationists in recent years as much as the mining of Mt Burnett and its effect on the unique flora of that region. It is the classic conflict between economic and conservation values, jobs or plants, renewable versus non renewable resource. How do you put a price on the priceless?? For when it is gone it can never return. There is only one Mt Burnett. I thank those members that provided feedback about the most appropriate action the Network should take following our request in the last newsletter.

The Network's objectives have been two fold: to ask the Minister to turn down any future application for mining licences in this area and add the Mt Burnett area to Kahurangi National Park, and to inform members and others of the special values of this area and encourage them to support its protection. We have also asked to be involved in the application and provide specialist advice as necessary. The NZ Biodiversity Strategy has as part of its vision

"We all work together to protect, sustain and restore our biodiversity, and enjoy and share in its benefits, as a foundation of a sustainable economy and society"

Be assured that over the coming months the Network will be working towards that vision as we endeavour to protect an important part of our biodiversity.

Plant of the Month



Ixerba brexioides.

Photo: John Smith-Dodsworth

Plant of the month for April is the not-threatened *Ixerba brexioides* (tawari). The Ixerbaceae is the only endemic New Zealand vascular plant family and while *I. brexioides* is not a threatened species it is the only species in the monogeneric family. The species is confined to the northern North Island from about Waitomo, Paeroa Range and Te Urewera northwards to the ranges just south of Kaitaia. It is a small tree up to 10 m tall with spreading crown and is an associate of kauri (*Agathis australis*) forest and montane cloud forest. The Network fact sheet may be found at the following link:

http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/vascular_plants/detail.asp?PlantID=1419

'Restoring our threatened plant life – empowering our community' - Network Conference 2005

Information about the forthcoming Network conference 2005 can now be obtained from the Network website (look under Conservation Info). A registration form can be downloaded from the site although copies have already been sent to Network members. Please contact the Network (info@nzpcn.org.nz) if you would like more copies of the form. Please let your friends and colleagues know about the conference and encourage them to come, learn and share ideas about the protection and restoration of our threatened plant life. Help with sponsorship and organisation of the conference would be very welcome - please contact David Given: david.given@ccc.govt.nz



Network Poster published

The Network has now published a threatened plant poster (A2) that has been posted to every school in the country. The purpose of the poster is to promote the Network website and encourage people to use the website to learn more about native plants. In the near future the Network will be sending the poster to every territorial local authority. The poster will be on display at the Network conference. Copies of the poster are available for sale (email info@nzpcn.org.nz to order your copy) — price: \$5/members and \$8/non-members (including postage).

Website update

We have now compiled images of over 1600 native vascular plant species onto the Network website. This represents more than 2/3rds of the native vascular flora. This has been made possible through the generous provision of images for use on the site by a wide range of people nationwide including: John Smith-Dodsworth, John Barkla, Jeremy Rolfe, Mike Thorsen, Bec Stanley, Peter de Lange, Richard Hursthouse. Thank you to those people for their support and generosity. Many more images have been provided by Colin Ogle and Peter de Lange that we have yet to upload. Please tell us if you can plug a gap or send the image in jpg form to the network at info@nzpcn.org.nz.

Network Plant Conservation Awards 2005

The New Zealand Plant Conservation Network has launched an awards scheme to acknowledge outstanding contributions to native plant conservation. A nomination form can be found on the website under Conservation info. We look forward to receiving your nominations for the various categories. Please bring this awards scheme to the attention of your colleagues and friends. The prize giving will be at the Network conference on the evening of Saturday 13 August 2005.

An important covenant opened in South Canterbury

On Wednesday 9 March the Sir Peter Elworthy covenant was opened. This covenant celebrates a special man and a threatened tree. The covenant is a memorial to Sir Peter Elworthy, who was a leader in the New Zealand farming community. Sir Peter held many and varied roles including being president of Federated Farmers from 1984–87 and chairman of the QEII National Trust from 1987–1993. The covenant was opened by the current QEII National Trust chairman Sir Brian Lochore and Lady Fiona Elworthy, with many distinguished guests on hand. The covenant is the fourth QEII covenant established on Craigmore, the Elworthy family farm.



Olearia hectorii.
Photo: Shannel Courtney.

The Sir Peter Elworthy covenant contains an important stand of Hector's tree daisy scientifically known as *Olearia hectorii*. *O. hectorii* has its threat status as nationally endangered, being one of New Zealand's rarest trees, having a total population of c. 3500 plants. *O. hectorii* is one of eight rare tree daisies included in the small-leaved tree daisy recovery plan and with conservation management overseen by the *Olearia* recovery group.

It is found from Marlborough to Southland, however until this site on Craigmore was found it was not currently known from Canterbury. Therefore this site serves to close the distribution gap.

The Craigmore site contains about 60 plants, which makes it the 6th largest population. Also the Craigmore site is one of only a few known from on limestone. Hector's tree daisy is generally found at low to mid altitude, these areas are generally in farmland in private ownership. Therefore support of landowners critical is for its protection, survival and recovery. Often management is needed to ensure protection of existing plants and to achieve recruitment. Therefore joint protection and conservation initiatives like this one between the landowner, QEII and DOC are crucial to its long term survival.

There are several reasons for the declines of the rare small-leaved tree daisies and in particular *O. hectorii*. Its habitat and ecology have in part led to its decline. It is a plant of fertile habitat and therefore has suffered greatly from land development and modification of its habitat. It is a plant of forest edges, often riparian stream margins or sometimes forest with an open canopy. Most known plants are old mature plants and there is a recruitment crisis. It needs bare ground for seedlings to establish. Therefore it needs some disturbance to create bare ground. However, now bare ground is generally occupied by pasture grasses and weeds that out compete any seedlings that may establish. Experimental work undertaken in Otago and Southland has used herbicides to kill the grass sward under plants to create open bare ground. This has allowed seedlings to establish. We now have to learn how to manage the weed re-growth to allow seedlings to survive and mature. Some of this work will be undertaken at this site in the future. Other management to be undertaken at the site is control of smothering vines and some habitat enhancement restoration planting.

Brian Rance, Olearia Recovery Group Leader (Department of Conservation) brance@doc.govt.nz

Update on Whitefly

In a previous newsletter (December 2004), Biosecurity New Zealand asked for assistance in searching for a new whitefly on *Melicytus*. Since this request, a Landcare Research Ltd Scientist, Rosa Henderson, found uncatalogued specimens of the same whitefly on *Melicytus micranthus* collected from Riccarton Bush, Christchurch, in 1954. Rosa's discovery clearly shows that the whitefly is not a new organism to New Zealand. It also suggests that the whitefly has more features in common with an endemic species than an exotic. Biosecurity NZ has decided to stand down its investigation given this new information. It has also advised that control of the whitefly, where it occurs in high numbers and causes damage to plants, is at the discretion of affected parties. Biosecurity NZ thanks all those who have searched for this whitefly and would be happy to receive any new distribution records if reported.

A new endemic sedge described from northern New Zealand

Cyperus insularis Heenan et de Lange has just been formally described as a new species distinct from the more widespread *C. ustulatus* A.Rich (Heenan & de Lange 2005). Both species are endemic to the New Zealand Botanical Region. *Cyperus insularis* differs from *C. ustulatus* by the grey-green leaves and involucre bracts, light pink or light purple-pink leaf sheaths, the uniformly green culm, inflorescence rays which are typically branched, by the glumes and ray bracts which are green at flowering, and which dry yellow-brown to light brown at fruiting, and also by the longer spikes, and stamens. The new species has a primarily northern offshore island distribution, with strongholds on the Kermadec, Three Kings and Poor Knights Islands. However, it also occurs in several mainland northern North Island locations, at several of which it is sympatric with *C. ustulatus*.

In their paper Heenan & de Lange (2005) also discuss the new species' ecology and conservation, noting that the current distribution infers that this species was probably once widespread in coastal habitats throughout the northern North Island, and that its decline from these places could be linked to the loss of sea bird breeding grounds. The species is only ever common when it is found in association with sea bird colonies, especially on rodent free islands. However, even in those island strongholds there seems to be some evidence of continuing decline, particularly on remote Macauley Island in the southern Kermadecs. The species has also lost ground on Raoul Island, where it is suggested the decline could be linked to the spread of buffalo grass (*Stenotaphrum secundatum*). While some of this decline could be the result of natural succession, until this is confirmed, Heenan & de Lange (2005) argue that the new species should be classified "Chronically Threatened/Gradual Decline", qualified DP (Data Poor). This conservation assessment is provisional and needs to be ratified by the New Zealand Threatened Plant Panel.

Like *Cyperus ustulatus*, which is now rather popular in cultivation *C. insularis* is an attractive sedge and is easily grown from fresh seed. At least one Auckland Native Plant nursery holds plants. Plants are in cultivation at the university of Auckland and at the Landcare Research Campus, Lincoln. In addition to the recognition of *C. insularis*, a lectotype is selected for *C. ustulatus* f. *grandispiculosus* Kük. ex Carse.

Reference

Heenan, P.B.; de Lange, P.J. 2005: *Cyperus insularis* (Cyperaceae), a new species of sedge from northern New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 43: 351-359.

Jane Smart leaves Plantlife International



They're calling it the end of an era. Fifteen years ago, Jane Smart started work as Director of Plantlife. She was also its only employee, hired after a successful but rather extravagant launch had spent most of the money raised from the initial set of members. She started work in a tiny office ('the broom cupboard') just behind the giant redwood section at the top of the staircase in London's world famous Natural History Museum. Jane is now leaving Plantlife to join the IUCN Secretariat as the Head of the Union's Species Conservation Programme, where she starts work on 1 April.

Under her tenure, Plantlife, now called Plantlife International, has grown steadily. Today, three moves later, it occupies a historic 18th Century property in the centre of the cathedral town of Salisbury, and has almost 30 staff. The organization, now with well over 12,000 paid-up supporters, has grown steadily under Jane's careful stewardship and is surely now the best-known plant conservation NGO in the world.

Unlike many conservation groups, its programme in the UK has followed very much the trajectory set out at the launch in 1989. It has acquired a series of 23 nature reserves, totalling over 4000 acres, and is hard at work rescuing endangered plants under its Back from the Brink programme, much funded by government grants. It continues to "punch above its weight" on the political agenda indeed Jane took the view in the early years that campaigning was the best way to raise the profile and get noticed on a miniscule budget. Today Plantlife receives press coverage that many other NGOs can only dream of. And it combines this with a popular celebration of wild plants that is Jane's particular contribution to its vision; last year, it declared a flower for each county in Britain, following a massive vote on the Internet, with coverage right across the media. There were even allegations of vote-rigging, which generated even more publicity!

Over the years, Plantlife's international work has grown, starting with the conference on wild plant conservation in Europe in 1995 and the emergence of Planta Europa, the network of plant conservation bodies in Europe. More recently, following Jane's contribution to the development of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation under CBD, International was added to the name and the conservation work focused into two sections, International and UK, each under a full-time Director. Plantlife has carved out a role for itself as the architect, promoter and guardian of the Important Plant Areas (IPAs) concept, whereby individual countries identify their IPAs. Seven such countries are due to report shortly.

Upcoming events

If you have important events or news that you would like publicised via this newsletter please email the Network (events@nzpcn.org.nz):

Rotorua Botanical Society - Okareka Mistletoe Restoration Project Weed Control Work Day - Saturday 16 April

Leader: Paul Cashmore 07 348 4421 (hm), 349 7432 (wk). Meet: Ex-Okareka store 8:45a.m. Grade: Medium–Hard. Activities for all ages and abilities will be provided. This may include releasing our September plantings and weed control elsewhere in the reserve.

Wellington Botanical Society – evening meeting. Monday 18 April — The Warm Autumn Rain... Mushrooms and Boletes in New Zealand

Speaker: Geoff Ridley, Science Manager (New Organisms), Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA). At certain times of the year mushrooms and boletes can be a conspicuous part of most types of vegetation in New Zealand yet most people know little about them. This talk will introduce the ecology, taxonomy and how to begin to identify these fungi. To be held at 7.30 p.m. at Victoria University, Wellington, Lecturer Theatre M101, ground floor Murphy Building, west side of Kelburn Parade. Enter building off Kelburn Parade about 20m below pedestrian overbridge.

Botanical Society of Otago. Annual General Meeting. Wednesday 20 April, 2005

Start time: 5:20 p.m. The date is still to be finalised, so this could change. The meeting will include a guest speaker to be advised. At the Zoology Benham Building, 346 Great King Street, behind the Zoology car park by the Captain Cook Hotel. Use the main entrance of the Benham Building to get in and go to the Benham Seminar Room, Rm. 215, 2nd floor. Please be prompt as we have to hold the door open. Contact Ian Radford, phone: (03) 479 9065.

Waikato Botanical Society AGM - Wednesday 27 April 2005

Have your say on running of the Waikato Botanical Society. Please forward nominations for 2005 committee members (or nominate yourself) to Andrea Brandon or Shirley Nichols. The short AGM will be followed by a talk by Cilla McCallum who is finishing a PhD on the sustainable harvest and cultural aspects of harakeke (flax). Venue: McMeekan Centre, Agresearch, Ruakura. Contact: Shirley Nichols ph 07 855 5061, Email: shirley.nichols@agresearch.co.nz. Time: 7.00pm

Botanical Society of Otago. Fungal Foray to Knight's Bush. Saturday 7 May, 2005

Start time: 8:00 a.m. Trip to Knight's Bush (Tuapeka West) to collect fungi with David Orlovich. The bush on the banks of the Clutha River contains beech, kanuka and mixed broadleaf/podocarp forest, so it should be a great locality for many exciting fungi. Bring hand lens, a basket or bag for collecting fungi, greaseproof paper (for wrapping specimens in the field) and a camera if you have one. Leave 8 AM from the Botany Dept carpark. More details will be posted closer to the date. Contact David Orlovich, phone: (03) 479 9060.

Wellington Botanical Society. Field trip. Saturday 7 May. Fungi foray

Leader: Geoff Ridley, Science Manager (New Organisms), ERMA, will follow up Monday's talk with a trip into the Five Mile Track, Rimutaka Forest Park for a look at fungi and bolete specimens.

**Botanical Society of Otago. Mushrooms and other fungi of eastern North America.
Wednesday 11 May, 2005**

Start time: 5:20 p.m. A talk by Dr Steve Stephenson, University of Arkansas. The forests of eastern North America support a large and diverse assemblage of macrofungi. What are some of the more colorful, unusual and interesting fungi to be found in these forests? What are their ecological roles? At the Zoology Benham Building, 346 Great King Street, behind the Zoology car park by the Captain Cook Hotel. Use the main entrance of the Benham Building to get in and go to the Benham Seminar Room, Rm. 215, 2nd floor. Please be prompt as we have to hold the door open. Contact David Orlovich, phone: (03) 479 9060.

Wellington Botanical Society. Evening meeting Monday 16 May

Members' evening. Please share your slides and photographic displays taken on BotSoc trips; your paintings, drawings and your favourite botanical readings. Plant specimens would add to a memorable evening. To be held at 7.30 pm at Victoria University, Wellington, Lecturer Theatre M101, ground floor Murphy Building, west side of Kelburn Parade. Enter building off Kelburn Parade about 20m below pedestrian overbridge.

8th Australasian Bryophyte Workshop. Saturday 25 June – Thursday 30 June 2005.

The 8th Australasian Bryophyte Workshop is to be held in Palma Village, North Queensland, Saturday 25 June to Thursday 30 June 2005. Expressions of interest are being sought now as numbers will be limited. Enquiries should be made to Andi Cairns, Tropical Biology, James Cook University, Townsville 4811, Australia. Email Andi.cairns@jcu.edu.au

Network conference 2005: Friday 12 – Sunday 14 August 2005 — *'Restoring our threatened plant life – empowering our community'*

For more details see article above or visit the Network website www.nzpcn.org.nz and look under Conservation Info/Events.